

# NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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***For Immediate Release***

**NOVEMBER 29, 2004**

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on November 19, 2004, **LEE ANN BLACKFORD**, age 32, of Paducah, Kentucky, was sentenced in United States District Court in Benton, Illinois. BLACKFORD was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment, 3 years supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$132,046.96 in restitution to N & N Plumbing located in Metropolis, Illinois.

BLACKFORD had previously pleaded guilty to a two count Information which charged her with one count of mail fraud and one count of wire fraud in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1343.

The evidence established that from on or about October 2001, and continuing to on or about October 27, 2003, BLACKFORD devised, operated and conducted a scheme and artifice to defraud, and to obtain money by means of false pretenses, from her employer N & N Plumbing, Metropolis, Illinois, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1343.

During the relevant time period, LEE ANN BLACKFORD was employed by N & N Plumbing as an Administrative Assistant. Her responsibilities included making payments to vendors for the company. BLACKFORD began printing and negotiating checks of her employer N & N Plumbing for her own personal benefit. In addition, online Internet transactions were also executed by BLACKFORD, directly debiting N & N Plumbing's bank account for her own personal benefit. Over approximately a three year period, checks written totaling \$75,904.49 and online Internet transactions of \$60,642.47 were negotiated or completed by LEE ANN BLACKFORD for her personal benefit.

The investigation in this case was by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney George Norwood.